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ABSTRACT

The myth of Asians as "the model minority" may hide the instructional needs of Asians and mislead policymakers. There is growing concern that Asians' low verbal scores are masked by their higher than average math scores and high school grade point averages. Principals and key staff at 12 (out of 20) schools identified as having successful compensatory education programs responded to a questionnaire concerning Cambodian, Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Laotian, Hmong, and Vietnamese students who were classified as limited English proficient (LEP). The survey results were interpreted in light of evaluation criteria for compensatory education programs in the state of California, and the responses of the California State Superintendent to the First Term Report of the Advisory Council on Asian/Pacific Islander Affairs. Findings include the following: (1) Asian students appear to benefit from schoolwork despite a lack of qualified bilingual staff and instructional materials in the primary language; (2) Asian students' success can be attributed to parents' support and cultural emphasis on traits that lead to achievement; and (3) the attributes of the survey schools that qualified them as having outstanding programs may compensate for other deficiencies. Asian/Pacific Islander students at the 12 survey schools should improve their performance if the recommendations of the State Superintendent and his Advisory Council are followed. Six tables of statistical data and a list of 21 references are included. (FMW)

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THE STATUS OF INSTRUCTIONAL PROVISIONS FOR ASIAN ETHNIC MINORITIES: LESSONS FROM THE CALIFORNIA EXPERIENCE

By

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(Presented at the 1987 AERA Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C.)

INTRODUCTION

Background

California identifies achieving compensatory education schools every two or three years. Previously identified schools that do not pass the next selection process go through a validation the following year to determine whether or not they should be reconfirmed as achieving schools. Those that opt out of the validation process, as well as those that are validated and not confirmed are dropped from the active list of achieving schools and cease to participate in the dissemination process.

Besides the selection of achieving schools, exemplary compensatory education programs are identified, too, for nomination of the United States Department of Education for national recognition. Very often they come off the list of achieving schools, although there have been four cases of schools with achieving programs that missed the achieving schools list. Including nine new exemplary schools identified in 1987 and one school with an exemplary Chapter 1 program which did not achieve "exemplary" status, there is now a total of 40 schools.

The selection of the above schools centered on academic performance and their evaluation in terms of six criteria areas commonly associated with effective schools: site leadership, academic emphasis, instructional effectiveness, facilitating school and classroom environment, continuing monitoring, and parent/community/district support.

The Respondent Schools

From the 40 schools referred to in the preceding section, 20 schools known to have any of the seven Asian ethnic groups in this study (Cambodians, Chinese, Filipinos, Koreans, Laos, Hmongs, and Vietnamese) were sent questionnaires. Assurance was made regarding the nondisclosure of school/district/staff identify, since the majority of the questions could involve compliance issues that could trigger unscheduled reviews. Of the 20 questionnaires sent out, 12 were returned by schools categorized as follows:

- Nature of Community

--Rural	0
--Semi-Urban	4
--Urban	8

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- Grade Span

--Elementary (any of grades kindergarten to six)	10
--Junior High (any of grades seven to nine)	1
--High School (any of grades ten to twelve)	1

- Size

--Small (less than 400 students)	1
--Medium (400 to 599 students)	5
--Large (600 to 999 students)	3
--Extremely Large (1,000 or more students)	3

The Problem

"Status of instructional provisions" is defined to include the following:

A. The Staff (certificated and noncertificated)

1. Status with respect to legal requirements
2. Knowledge of the child's native language
3. Knowledge of the child's culture
4. Perceived ways to improve staffing provisions

B. Instructional Materials

1. Special materials in the student's first language
2. Asian culture-related printed materials
3. School/district/State Department of Education guides for teaching the Asian ethnics in this study

C. Instructional Techniques/Strategies Used

1. Needs assessment
2. Individualized learning programs
3. Special services
4. Instructional procedures

E. LEPness and Math/Reading Performance

F. Major Instructional Problems/Their Remediation/Expected Effect on Performance and LEPness

G. Facilitative School and Student Factors

H. Perceived Ways of Improving Provisions for Asian Students

Justification for this Study

Census data indicated that collectively Asian/Pacific Islanders were the fastest growing racial group in America during the 1970s, increasing 142 percent between 1970 and 1980. As of September 1985, there were 5.1 million Asian Americans in the United States, 36 percent of whom lived in California. For

Asian students, however, there is a growing concern that their low verbal scores are often masked by their higher than average math scores and high school grade point average (13).

The myth of the "model minority" concept, referring to Asians, may promote a positive self-image for Asians. It can do damage, however, by misleading policymakers into notions that Asians are free from educational problems. The well-touted model of Asian culture--disciplined, closely knit families, lovers of learning, hardworking, steeled in determination, sacrificing--need not mean that problems are alien to them. This paper hypothesizes that Asians can do better if their special educational needs are met (5).

The Questionnaire

The 15-page questionnaire was completed cooperatively by the principal and key staff (resource teachers) who deal directly with the students. Included was a student information page for each ethnic group, reporting by numbers (not names) students who are classified as LEP. Where there were more than 12 students in an ethnic group, every other student was included. The table below presents the elementary schools numbered according to their alphabetical order, with the junior high school numbered 11 and the high school numbered 12.

Table 1

Total Enrollment Per School/No. of Asian LEP Students Considered Per School/Per Asian Ethnic Group

	Schools												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Totals
Total School Enrollment	824	649	820	525	500	490	392	600	850	987	1004	2232	
Ethnic Groups													
a. Cambodians	1	0	33	5	1	0	0	25	2	26	11	193	297
b. Chinese	0	0	0	7	12	1	1	2	10	104	2	10	149
c. Filipinos	4	0	4	11	23	4	1	1	7	20	6	0	81
d. Koreans	0	0	0	8	3	0	2	0	0	3	0	0	16
e. Laos	17	12	1	0	0	2	1	4	1	24	20	78	160
f. Hmongs	13	0	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	21	47
g. Vietnamese	2	0	1	7	1	4	56	47	2	98	3	9	230
Total no. of Asian LEP students considered	37	12	52	38	40	11	61	79	22	275	42	311	980

Besides the above information, the individual data sheets called for the following: number of years in United States schools, current and expected end-of-year degree of LEPness, reading and math performance (whether above or below grade level) and expectations of gains or no gains. Level of LEPness is defined here in terms of three levels:

- o Level 1 - Heavily LEP
- o Level 2 - Moderately LEP
- o Level 3 - Close to exiting from the bilingual program or mainstreaming

Current performance in mathematics and reading were not reported as actual scores, but only in terms of positon (above, at, or below grade level) with respect to the student's grade level.

End-of-year performance expectation in math and reading was in terms of gain or no gain.

Interpreting the questionnaire data. Interpretation of the data was collated with information derived from the selection process used to identify achieving compensatory education schools and Chapter 1 programs. The three-level screening process included performance criteria, ratings for effective practices reported on a program information form, freedom from serious compliance issues, and a school visitation that involved interviews, structured and unstructured observations, as well as questionnaire administration. The California Superintendent's Response (13) to the First Term Report from the Advisory Council on Asian/Pacific Islander Affairs (5) and other related readings also proved helpful in this paper.

THE FINDINGS

The Staff

Among the 12 respondent schools, the majority of Asian ethnic programs do not have certificated bilingual teachers; teachers on waiver (that is, teachers for whom bilingual certification has been waived officially); as well as bilingual aides and volunteers who speak the children's language. This is contrary to California law (14) which requires that in the absence of certificated bilingual teachers, there should be teachers on waiver who have the assistance of bilingual aides.

The use of volunteers who speak the children's language presents a better picture, although most of the volunteers serve on a nonregular basis. This is to be expected of relatively new immigrant parents whose commitment to education (Mordkowitz and others) must share their time with facing problems of survival.

It is especially important for LEP students to have teachers and administrators who know the students' language and cultural background. Research has shown that this knowledge has a significant influence on the peformance of LEP (9) students. Substantiating this is an article on St. Cloud, Minnesota schools by Scherer (15) wherein he states the need for teachers of these types of students to be devoted and culturally sensitive. Questionnaire returns, however, indicated this knowledge to be from "little" to "moderate."

Below is Table 2 showing the actual number of existing bilingual programs per ethnic group in the 12 schools and the number of such programs characterized by the five staffing criteria in the key below the table.

Table 2

Actual Number of Bilingual Programs Per Ethnic Group in the Twelve Schools/Number of Programs Characterized by Five Staffing Criteria

Ethnic groups	Actual no. of programs	Staffing criteria				
		1	2	3	4	5
Cambodian	9	0	1	3	3	2
Chinese	9	2	2	3	2	3
Filipino	10	3	1	1	2	3
Korean	4	1	1	1	3	1
Lao	10	1	2	1	0	5
Hmong	3	0	1	0	0	3
Vietnamese	11	0	2	3	3	4

Key to Staffing Criteria:

1 - Certified bilingual teachers
2 - Teachers on waiver
3 - Bilingual aides
4 - Volunteers who speak the children's language
5 - Staff knowledge of students' culture (moderately to well)

The above table indicates that none of the programs for Cambodian, Hmong, and Vietnamese students in nine of the 12 schools employs certified bilingual teachers; that none of the three Hmong programs has a bilingual aide; and that none of the ten Lao programs and the three Hmong programs has volunteers who speak the children's language.

How may the above staffing provisions be improved? The respondents suggested that the California State Department of Education assume the leadership role in identifying resources, both human and material, and serve as a brokerage for dissemination and use of such resources. This should be attempted by continuing efforts to in-service and gain the support of ethnic groups.

The information provided by the respondents is in line with findings and recommendations made by the California State Superintendent's Advisory Council on Asian/Pacific Islander Affairs (5), on the basis of special hearings conducted in areas highly populated with Asian/Pacific Islander students in grades pre-school through twelve. The overriding message at the hearings was that Asian/Pacific Islander students have unique needs that are underserved by the public schools, as shown by disparities between the percentage of Asian/Pacific Islander students in California and the percentage of certificated staff from the same

group. Presenters at the public hearings expressed concern that the under-utilization of experienced and qualified Asian/Pacific Islanders may adversely affect role modeling for their student population.

Table 3 below (4) presents statistics from the California State Department of Education's racial and ethnic distribution of certificated staff for 1984-85, showing the disparity between the percentage in the Table and the 7.1 percent representing Asian/Pacific Islanders in the statewide student population.

Table 3

Percentage of Asian/Pacific Islanders*
Among California's Certificated Staff for 1984-85

Position	Asian/ Pac. Is. .		Filipino		Totals	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Teachers	6004	3.4	1187	.7	7191	4.1
Vice-Principals	84	2.8	10	.3	94	3.1
Principals	105	1.8	17	.3	122	2.1
Program Administrators	147	3.1	18	.4	165	3.5
Assistant/Associate Deputy Supts.	3	1.1	0	0	3	1.1
Superintendents	4	.6	1	.2	5	.8

*Includes Indians, Pakistanis, and people from the Pacific Islands (other than Filipinos).

Among the key solutions proposed in the State Superintendent's response to the Council are the following:

- Implementation of a media campaign to promote and increase the recruitment of minorities into teaching.
- Joint effort by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Chancellor of the California State University and Colleges System (CSUS) to accellerate the education of a new generation of teachers for the multi-cultural schools of California.
- Monitoring by compliance review teams of an Education Code provision for districts to create paraprofessional positions leading to full-time status on a career ladder.
- Exploring the possibility of a Special Teacher Corps program for Asian/Pacific Islanders (similar to the Migrant/Spanish Special Teacher Corp program of earlier years).
- Adoption in spring 1986 by the California School Leadership Academy of a policy to have women and minorities (including Asian/Pacific Islanders) comprise 50 percent of each trainee group (13).

Without representation at the policy- and decision-making levels, Asian/Pacific Islander needs will remain ignored.

The last item above is supported by Taniguchi's paper, "Education Without Representation . . ." wherein the writer contends that "Asian Pacifics in administrative decision making would have the position from which to speak out and recognize the needs of the Asian Pacific community" (20).

Instructional Materials

There is a dearth of instructional materials in the first language of the students, especially in Hmong and Korean. Tapes and films as teaching aids are nonexistent and printed materials relating to the students' cultures range from "none" to "several," with the majority of the 12 schools having only "a few." School and district guides for teachers' use have been developed "to some extent" by nearly all the schools involved.

The California State Department of Education has also developed handbooks to serve as guides and informational sources to those who teach Cantonese, Filipino, Korean, and Vietnamese students with the assistance of funds from the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs and the Office of Educational Opportunity Programs, U.S. Department of Education (8,9,10,11). The development of guides, however, has been slow and has yet to be extended to other ethnic groups.

The findings of the Council on Asian/Pacific Islander Affairs include:

- o The ommission of Asian/Pacific Islander experience from instructional materials

- o The virtual absence of primary language instructional materials

The above, according to the report, may adversely affect the students' self-esteem and success in school (4). In response, the California State Superintendent proposes to include the Asian experience in textbooks and other instructional materials. Although it is not feasible for the State Department of Education to develop primary language materials, it may adopt materials developed by publishers through the textbook adoption process. Publishers will create materials if there is a market demand for them (13),

Instructional Techniques/Strategies Used

All the 12 schools surveyed use informal testing to assess student needs. Combined with informal testing, teacher observation/judgment is used by 11 schools, while eight schools use parent interviews in addition. All of them provide each LEP student with an individual learning program (ILP) that is cooperatively developed in most cases, by classroom teachers, resource specialists, and parents with some assistance by counselors and district coordinators. All the 12 schools provide Chapter 1 services to Asian LEP students, 11 provide ESL services, and at least seven schools use the following strategies:

- o Translators/interpreters
- o One-to-one tutoring
- o Small group instruction
- o Larger group instruction (more than ten per group)
- o Parent in-service to enable them to help their children
- o Crossage tutors
- o Community volunteers, like retirees and organizations

In response to the question of differential approaches to instruction with respect to varying levels of LEPness, the respondents give evidence of attempts to vary their strategies. For the non-English and the heavily LEP students, sheltered English, the physical response approach, listening activities, an hour a day in a language lab, TPR (total physical response), survival materials of the Defense Language Institute, pullout instruction in a resource lab, ESL, one-to-one instruction were mentioned by most of the respondents. For the moderately LEP and the Level 3 students (close to mainstreaming), most of the respondents continue with ESL, the sheltered English approach, and one-to-one instruction by aides. In addition, they utilize FEP (Fluent English Proficient) crossage tutors, storytelling, cooperative learning strategies, and small group instruction.

The Council on Asian/Pacific Islander Affairs identified the following key concerns from testimonies gathered at public hearings:

- o The lack of valid instruments for assessment and evaluation purposes
- o Questionable reclassification criteria based largely on teacher judgment that often result in mainstreaming children before they are ready for instruction in English classes
- o The need to identify and develop specific strategies to help both immigrant and foreign-born Asian students acquire mastery of oral and written language skills (4).

The State Superintendent's response to the above concerns points out the fact that California law allows districts the flexibility to assess needs based on teacher judgment. However, the districts' reclassification procedures will be reviewed and monitored through the state's accountability program. With regard to the development of specific strategies to raise the level of language functioning among Asian American students, the Superintendent's response stresses the fact that this is the goal of the English/language arts curriculum for students with special needs and that, therefore, the development of a document on special strategies will involve the Council's input (13).

LEPness and Years in U.S. Schools

The questionnaire sent to respondent schools called for "years in current school" and "years in other U.S. schools." Some respondents, however, gave no information, while a good number responded only to "years in current school." The only cases considered in this section are those for whom both "years in current school" and "years in other schools" were clear. For example, where "years in current school" indicated 2 and "years in other schools" indicated 0 or a question mark (?), "years in U.S. schools" was determined to be 2; where

"years in other schools" was left blank, the case could not be considered because of the uncertainty of the blank. (However, it could be the case that where "years in other schools" was left blank, the current school is the student's first and only U.S. school.)

Table 4 below shows how LEPness relates to "years in U.S. schools."

Table 4

"Years in U.S. Schools"
and Current Degree of LEPness

Number years in U.S. schools	Current degree of LEPness						Total No. of students
	1		2		3		
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
1	69	83	12	15	2	2	83
2	31	45	32	46	6	9	69
3	16	30	29	54	9	16	54
4	6	26	16	70	1	4	23
5	0	0	16	73	6	27	22
6	2	13	8	53	5	33	15

Without presuming that years in U.S. schools alone are responsible for a student's exit from LEPness, studies on effective schools have shown that good schools do make a difference (3, 6). Notable is the decreasing number/percentage of Level 1 LEPness from one year in U.S. schools to three years in U.S. schools and the increase in the number of cases at Levels 2 and 3 with the increase of years in U.S. schools. After three years in U.S. schools, the results seem erratic. It is possible that those who tend to remain in the bilingual program for that length of time will tend to be there anyway after any number of years in the program. There are other factors that affect English acquisition by Asian students. For example, interviews conducted by the writer during the process of selecting achieving compensatory education schools indicated that the majority of Asian parents do not want their children in the company of non-Asian students as a precaution against unwholesome influences on the latter's personal lives, as well as their learning attitudes and habits. Added to that are fears that draw upon past racism (20) and the incidence of violence against Asians in schools (5).

LEPness and Math/Reading Performance

The percentage of students at each level of LEPness was determined to be as follows:

- Level 1 48%
- Level 2 43%
- Level 3 9%

The numbers and percentage of students performing at or below grade level in reading and math are shown below:

Table 5

Number/Percentage of Students
Performing At or Below Grade Level in Reading and Math

	No./Percent of students			
	Reading N = 641		Mathematics N = 616	
Performance level	Number	%	Number	%
Above grade level	194	30	389	63
Below grade level	453	70	227	37

Although 48 percent of the students are classified as Level 1 (heavily LEP), 43 percent as Level 2 (moderately LEP), and only 9 percent as Level 3 (close to exiting from the program), 30 percent are above grade level in reading and 63 percent are in math. It may be surmised that the majority of those who are above grade level in reading are Level 2 LEPs and that no less than 11 percent of those who are above grade level in math are heavily LEP or are Level 1 students. It should be remembered, though, that the school respondents are among California's better if not the best compensatory education schools--that is, schools in poverty areas with concentrations of students who are or were below grade level at the time of entry into the compensatory education program. It will be good to compare the students' performance with that of Asian students in noncompensatory education schools or in non-awarded compensatory education schools.

It should be noted, too, that the N for Tables 1 and 4 are not the same, because the latter includes only students for whom there are record of formal testing.

The data on the 12 respondent schools support the facts presented by other sources regarding the comparative performance of Asian students in mathematics (1,4,5) which often tends to mask their performance in other learning areas.

The respondents' expectations of end-of-year peformance for the students are very high in both reading and math. Since the questionnaires were returned to the writer at about the end of February 1987 that left the respondents approximately 14 weeks to work with the students until the end of the schoolyear. Expectations in both reading and math were in terms of "gain" or "no gain." For the students included in the performance report, the results for reading and math are as follows:

Table 6

Expectations of End-of-Year "Gains" or "No Gains"
for Students in Reading and Mathematics

Subject	Number of students	Expectations			
		Gain		No Gain	
		Number	%	Number	%
Reading	647	598	92	29	8
Mathematics	616	592	96	24	4

While expectations per se do not necessarily ensure performance and are mediated by various factors, in the case of the respondent schools it can be safely assumed that most of such factors reside in the staff and communities of such schools in general. The qualities that make them successful are "basically those that have to do with human relations (people as they relate to, deal with, work for, and with one another), a lot of caring, goal orientation, dedication, order and discipline, and belief in students and in one another" (3).

Major Instructional Problems: Remediation and Expected Effect on Performance and LEPness

Here are the major problems in the instruction of Asian students, as identified by the respondents:

- The reluctance of parents to come to school and get involved in the education of their children
- Lack of qualified certficated and noncertificated personnel
- Lack of appropriate basic learning materials, especially for the older non-English speaking and the LEP
- Asian difficulty with accepting failure and disappointment if they do not achieve what they and their families expect
- Legal mandates without sufficient financial support

Are the schools/districts involved moving to remediate the above problems? From the school respondents:

- No 2
- To some extent 5
- To a large extent 5
- We have given up 0
- We will keep trying 6

Although two of the 12 respondents have not done any remediation, it is observed that no one has given up and that six will keep trying.

To what extent do the above problems hamper the progress of Asian students? From the respondents:

- o Slightly 1
- o To some extent 9
- o To a large extent 2
- o Completely 0

To what extent are the students making progress in spite of the above problems?

- o No progress 0
- o Little progress 0
- o Moderate progress 1
- o Much progress 11

Some of the above problems have been pointed out by other researchers. The reluctance of parents to participate in school activities can be due to embarrassment from not knowing English and being different, as gathered by the writer from interviews with Asian parents. It could be because of their unquestioning respect (6,15) for teachers and school people, in general, which leaves them willing to entrust the education of their children to educators.

The lack of qualified staff and of appropriate instructional materials has been discussed earlier. On the other hand, the Asian difficulty with accepting failure and disappointment could be due to the Asian "bias toward effort attributions," (15) the sense that they would have done better if they had worked hard enough.

Regarding legal mandates without sufficient financial support, California law will be a good example, as in the requirement to have certificated bilingual teachers without the fiscal support needed to recruit and train prospective teachers.

Educationally Facilitative Factors Resident in the School/Students

School factors viewed by the respondents as facilitative include:

- o Flexible placement of students with opportunities to move up as the language proficiency improves
- o Effective coordination of bilingual services with Chapter 1 services
- o Accepting, sympathetic and caring teachers
- o High level of expectations of student performance
- o Continuing monitoring of student progress
- o Adequate counseling and courses beyond ESL
- o An extra mile of understanding and caring

Factors in the students viewed by the respondents as facilitative include:

- Emphasis of Asian culture on learning
- Respect for school and teachers, hence students apply themselves more to schoolwork
- Eagerness to learn based on an understanding that learning is key to improving the quality of their new life
- Strong personal drive to master English, pass the subjects and graduate
- Parental support and high expectations
- The Asian work ethic

Perceived Ways of Improving Instructional Provisions for Asian Students

Most of the suggestions offered by the school respondents are covered in the California State Superintendent's Response . . . to the Advisory Council . . . (13) The more unique ones follow:

- Stop the complete isolation of students in bilingual classes. (Although the requirement is for LEP students to compose not more than two-thirds of bilingual classes, this has been difficult to implement. Hence it is gradually being phased out and has been eliminated from the latest Compliance Review Instrument. AB 4276 which became effective in January 1987, requires LEP students to be enrolled in bilingual classrooms 80 percent of the schoolday and to be mainstreamed 20 percent of the day.)
- School must provide the enrichment that the parents cannot give.
- More funding for staff training and materials
- In-service for everyone among school/district staff on Asian diverse cultures and appropriate strategies for teaching them.

Improvement strategies not contained above nor in earlier pages of this paper, but included in the State Superintendent's response (13) are:

- Districts will be encouraged to incorporate objectives in their school improvement plans to address unusual language data from CAP (California Assessment Program) report for language minority students, including Asian students.
- An Asian Bilingual Task Force will be established to advise the Bilingual Education Office on programs and activities that impact on the Asian population.
- The Department of Education will seek funding to design a two-year study to ascertain whether or not Asian/Pacific Islanders are counseled into a narrow range of career choices.

Closing Statements

The data presented in this paper are from 12 of California's achieving compensatory education schools, as well as from findings of the California State Superintendent's Advisory Council on Asian/Pacific Islander Affairs (based on public hearings conducted in counties with large Asian/Pacific Islander populations). While it is clear that qualified staff and instructional materials for Asian students leave much to be desired, the students appear to benefit from schoolwork. The tribute goes to Asian parents for their support and to their culture which impresses on the young the attitudes, habits, and motivational level that lead to achievement. But, again, the 12 schools are among California's better compensatory education schools where strong leadership, academic focus, caring teachers, a facilitative school/classroom enviornment, continuous tracking of student progress, and community/district support may be compensating for the lack in other areas. There is, however, a need to know what is happening in lesser schools. To what extent can the qualities found in better schools compensate for the serious lack in qualified staff and materials? It seems certain that the Asian students in the 12 schools will do better, given the remedies proposed by the State Superintendent's Council on Asian/Pacific Islander Affairs and the remedies agreed to by the State Superintendent. Asian students should not be penalized for having what they have to begin with. They must have what by law and in principle is due them.

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